

Only Bolero Skirts Draw Ire Of Shortgrass Area Women Shoppers

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MERTZON — At the close of the Halloween week, the women's protest movement against food prices had not reached the Shortgrass Country.

No incidents of purse swinging, parasol jousting, hatpin impaling or spiked heel flogging had marred the scene around any of the supermarkets in the area. According to reliable reports, chain store managers were continuing to pat their feet to the tune of cash register bells, while their customers launched a near-record attack on the Halloween weekend specials.

To be certain this was true, I conducted an on-the-spot check of a large store on the outskirts of San Angelo. Since my wife at the time had everyone from the chain's president to the downtown warehouseman distracted by her onslaught on their inventory, I was able to wander freely about the store, unhampered by anybody except the mob of lady shoppers.

This is what I found:

At the cleansing agent counter, detergents were moving briskly. Bath soap was sluggish to weak, but volume was predicted to pick up when the new contest season opens in December. Tooth paste and mouth wash had lowered somewhat from their mid-week high on double stamp day, but the anticipated demand for these items to dissolve Halloween confections was expected to offset the small losses.

Over in the clothing section, trading was heavy; nylon hose was in the spotlight. Iron-on patches for men's trousers were a close second, and a special pre-Christmas offering on fire-damaged neckties was receiving good play. Imported bolero skirts were the only loser, but this condition was expected to correct itself when the ban against Frank Sinatra records is lifted in Mexico.

Though the crowds in the cosmetic section were too heavy to pinpoint the trend, ear lobe neutralizers appeared to be the leader. However, all beauty potions were well supported, from the new glow in the dark cornplasters to the reliable old hormone cream for rejuvenating nail cuticles. Before the commerce in powder puffs and ear shadow salves could be rated, the inexorable throngs of shoppers forced me through the din of the toy department and out into the aisles of the meat and produce section.

After having sustained some body punches that would shock a referee specializing in grudge fights, the open spaces of the meat and vegetable division were a pleasant relief. Also, the pace was relaxing as there were only a few carts browsing among the counters. Occasionally a small flurry did break out in the pumping section, and for a short time TV dinners enjoyed a mild spurt for the pre-supper trade. For the most part, the only source of interest was an occasional shopper trying to balance a tray of some frozen concoction on a six-pack of hair spray, or some lonely man looking for a quiet place to read his paper.

So, generally, meat and produce were termed as steady to slow, with frozen prepared meals carrying most of the volume.

Baking supplies and canned goods turned out to be in the same category; had it not been for the drawing capacity of the nearby pet department, there would have been little justification for keeping this once vital division open.

By the close of the survey, it was obvious that the protest movement was limited to the temporary boycott on bolero skirts. In the rest of the store, not one soul was dissatisfied with the merchandise or in the least unhappy about prices. It was mighty heartening to learn that shoppers were determined to stay with harried farmers and poor ranchers to the end.